The Brethren Evangelist

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ASHLAND, Ohio, June 19, 1889.

The Promise.

At Pentecost Peter preached to the repentant people that the promise was unto them and their children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Subsequent events prove that the proclamation concerning those afar off referred to the Gentile nations. This promise most assuredly was an element in the salvation of sinners, for Peter was addressing cruel and rebellious Jews, who had stained their hands by crucifying the Lord Jesus. Then the fact that no explanation is made as to what the promise spoken of referred to, shows that the Jews were very familiar with the knowledge of the promise.

The promise he spoke of is the one made to Abraham, that in his seed the nations of the earth should be blessed. The salvation he offered to them was therefore the salvation through the promise, which is not yet realized in essence, but only hoped for by faith in Jesus Christ.

All of the possession and power of Christians are in prospect only. The positive statements of the Bible that relate to the salvation of man, and things pertaining thereto, are all in prospect. We are born of God in prospect. The promise is to you and your children, says Peter.

1 John 3·2, 'Now are we the sons of God, and it doeth not yet appear what we shall be.' Again, Rom. 8:14—'For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

Now these are plain, unequivocal statements, but how are we the sons of God? This is the next step in the inquiry. Is it a real sonship following the process of an actual birth? or is it sonship in prospect or promise only or through faith and obedience in Christ Jesus? Yes, we are the sons of God by promise. He who believeth on the son hath life, or more plainly stated the promise of life. If God and Christ are able to perform what they have promised, then the life is secure, it is sure, and it is therefore no breach of propriety to use language in speech which would seem to indicate that real possession is enjoyed, as God will not leave the most minute part of his promises or purpose unaccomplished.

Thus, according to 1 John 2:1, we are called the sons of God. He says, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us to call us the sons of God.' Here is the key. God calls us his sons. We are not sons by any actual process of birth, but only in symbolic processes—beliving in Jesus and obeying his precepts.

1 John 5:1—Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.' This is a positive scripture. The present tense of the verb is used. Taking this as it stands, some apply it to the whole natural man, and would make the flesh and blood seem to be born of God. What is born of God? It certainly can not mean the flesh and blood, or the man as he is seen in this world. Has there been so complete a transformation, that the whole man is begotten of God? No, it cannot be so. Only the mind has accepted a new belief. The belief is of God. No man can come to Christ except the Father draw him. The promises made by God to men, when intelligently presented, draw men. Whosoever believeth is begotten or born of God. It is not the whole man, but his belief which is born of God.

A man's belief is often put for the whole man. In this case it is very right to do so. A real belief prompts men to action, and a belief in Christ leads the man to do the commandments of Christ. This then is the strength and power of the Christian religion, and the man who does so is all the same as really and truly born of God, for the seed of eternal life is in him, and when the full time comes, he will take on the glorified body.

There is in Grammar a law that bears the name of synecdoche, which puts a part for a whole, and a whole for a part. It is therefore not out of place to speak of a man's belief as though it was all of the man. Under this view it is easy to understand the statements of scripture on being born of God, and heirs according to the promise. There is no lack of harmony in the scriptures upon any subject when accepted as they are written and understood as they are intended.

The whole fabric of salvation rests upon the Promise, which Peter preached at Pentecost. The appearance of Christ in the world was the accomplishment of a part of the promise. The promise is wholly unconditional. Not one condition is to be found in it. God has blessed man with this covenant, that is a knowledge of it, and man can avail himself of its advantages. But in doing this there is a counter covenant, the gospel of Jesus Christ, which has conditions that must be accepted and performed before heirship is assured, or claim to the promise is established by faith in Christ and obedience to his commandments.

Notes About Our Johnstown Brethren.

The following items were gathered from a conversation with Bro. J. B. Rittgers.

Bro. Rittgers house was washed away and all his library, clothes, furniture, total loss. He was at Rosedale preaching at the time.

Bro. R. Z. Replogle's were all in the house and then floated with the back water. Mrs. Replogle's sister and daughters were visiting them at the time, and were all drowned. Her body was found in a kneeling posture at her bedside. His house capsized and he pulled his family up through a window and saved them.

Bro. W. A. Adams and his whole family were carried away, but all were saved. The ruins of the house were found some distance from the spot where it stood, and Bro. Adams could hardly distinguish them.

Bro. Samuel J. Giffin and wife floated about upon the water all night upon a piece of their house, a door or some part.

Bro. Daniel Crofford is still in the Cambria Iron works and is one of the managers or overseers. He held such a position before the flood, and the man next higher was drowned, and he has been advanced.

Bro. Peter A. Cobaugh stayed in his store, with his wife until the water had risen some depth in the second story. Then fearing the building would crash, he took her in one arm, and plunged into the water, then more than fifteen feet deep and succeeded in swimming about four rods to another building and were saved.

The Brethren church has one end knocked out, and a flat car knocked a hole in one side wall, and some other object knocked a hole in the other side.

Bro. Rittgers in Ohio.

Very unexpectedly Bro. J. B. Rittgers, pastor of the Johnstown church, came in upon us last week. He is out on a mission of raising money to repair the Johnstown church house. He told us many things about the horror. We gave him what encouragement we could and bade him God speed in the work. We commend him to the substantial sympathy of all the churches. Open your heart and purse brethren, to his appeal.

He has fixed a series of appointments in Ohio:

He was at North Liberty, June 16th, morning, and at Ankneytown in the evening. Glenford, 17, and 18th.

He will be at Dayton, June 19, Bear Creek, June 20; Miamisburg, June 21; Farmersville, June 22; Winchester, June 23; West Alexandria, June 25; Pleasant Hill, June 28; Covington, June 29. He will then go to Indiana and spend some time among the churches. But many churches he can not visit, so let pastors and members go to work at once and raise subscriptions and take collections, and send to us, so that the poor brethren of Johnstown can speedily have their church privileges restored to them.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

'Does the Brethren Church need a Creed,' is a topic on which Bro. W. J. H. Bauman writes. The reason why men want confessions of faith is because the gospel does not teach what they want to believe. Bro. Bauman is in favor of letting well enough alone.

There is an unusual amount of manuscript on hand at this time, and correspondents will please exercise a little patience.

Reports from Russia say that great preparations for war are now taking place. The time is not here just yet to beat spears into pruning hooks, and swords into plowshares.

A series of Catholic Congresses were held in several of the governments of Europe recently, for the purpose of establishing united action in gaining the temporal power for the Pope. They were all secret, and, as a result, little will be learned by the public, what line of action was adopted.

Another harvest season is almost here, and there seems to be fair crops in all parts of the country; the prospects are more generally good than usual.

Stanley, the famous African explorer has again been heard from. He is moving up and down in a vast continent to discover new people and new lands. The Bible yet remains a great unexplored continent in knowledge, parts of which are still unknown. The man who claims that all of the truths of the Bible are discovered, utters as great an untruth as the one who says all of the lands of the earth are known.

The Brethren at Johnstown have done the proper thing in publishing a certificate that Bro. Rittgers is authorized to receive subscriptions for repairing of their church.

At the late Presbyterian Assembly a Chinese Missionary, R. M. Mateer, was a delegate. To a reporter he said:

'How large is the Shan-Tung province?'

'It has an area equal to the size of Missouri, and contains a population of 30,000,000. These people live principally on wheat, as the province is too far north to raise rice. A short crop year means starvation to many thousands. There are few trees in the country, and the people raise their own fuel. It is a plant with a stalk somewhat larger than that of Indian corn. The leaves are gathered from the stalk and used for fodder, and the stalk is carefully stowed away for firewood. I am stationed at the city of WeiHiem, and manage to buy coal for our schools and dwellings.'

'How many converts have been made in Shan-Tung?'

'About 2,300, and they are not 'rice Christians.' 'Rice Christians' are those Chinamen who pretend to be converted in order to get something free. They hang around and get food and are professional converts for what they can make. The assertion that a Chinaman is never really converted to Christianity is untrue. They have a faith, so simple, so pure, so trusting that actually many of them verify the Biblical narratives of primitive Christians, who were exorcised of evil spirits. Sometimes a great commotion is created in a village when a Christian Chinaman has by prayer and faith had the devils cast out of him. It is wonderful, miraculous, but true beyond all doubt. Somehow we missionaries there are not possessed of the power to exorcise and cast out evil as these faithful Chinaman, but we see and know that these things are of common occurence among our converts. Perhaps if we had the simple and intense faith, the concentration of spiritual power that they have, we might be given the same privilege and direct divine manifestations that come to them. If the skeptics who doubt the genuineness of Chinese converts could see how they are persecuted and have to give up everything to embrace Christianity they would be convinced of their mistake.

We have on hand a lengthy apology from Bro. D. C. Christner, of Philadelphia, why he served his relation with the Disciples of Christ and united with the Brethren. We expect to publish it next week.

There is a large degree of that commendable quality known as 'Push' about The Brethren Tract Society, and they are the first to announce a book on the Johnstown horror. Pastors and others, read the notice and take hold, and help yourself.

A Certificate.

Johnstown, Pa., June 10, 1889.

This is to certify that the bearer, Rev. J. B. Rittgers, is authorized to solicit and receive funds to repair damages to our church building during the flood. Any contributions given him will be thankfully received.

DANIEL CROFFORD.
ALBERT TRENT.
S. A. SNOOK.
L. J. RIPPLE.

Trustees of the Johnstown Brethren Church.

Salem Church, Ind.

We are plodding along here as usual. Have had no accessions for quite a while, but we think there are some that will come in soon. There are quite a number that should unite. Several young folks that we would be glad to see take up the cross. Then there are heads of families that are yet standing aloof from church relation, setting a poor example before their children, refusing to walk upon the 'King's high way.'

We will have a series of meetings in August, and may the Lord bless and may sinners be gathered into the fold, is my prayer.

B. L. GORDON.

An Appeal.

The sad calamity that has befallen Johnstown is something that has never been heard of in the history of these United States.

The fact that on the 31st of May the reservoir about nine miles east of Johnstown gave way and dashing its infuriated waters down upon the city until it was literally wiped out of existence, as published in the EVANGELIST is only too true.

I have visited the place where Johnstown formerly stood as one of the most prosperous cities in Pennsylvania, and am sorry to say the wreck and ruin can not be imagined, much less described. Had fire destroyed the city it would have been a blessing, compared with water. No Insurance Policies provided for such a fate, no time to remove household furniture, food or clothing from their homes, but almost instantaneously the maddened water rolled down upon the city, seized men, women and children and all that constituted home and buried them beneath the infuriated waves.

Ten thousand people, it is supposed, lost their lives, ten thousand more are homeless and in destitute circumstances. The Editor last week stated that probably two Brethren churches had been destroyed, but fortunately it is not as bad as was at first supposed.

The Brethren church in that city is a two story brick building that cost from $12,000 to $13,000, and although the water was about four inches deep in the second story it would had injured the church but little, had not the skating rink passed up the stream and struck one corner of that splendid edifice, but such is not the case, yet I think the damage will not be more than five hundred dollars, but it should be immediately repaired as a storm might entirely ruin the building.

As a people we all looked with pride on the Johnstown church not simply because they had such a splendid church edifice, but on account of its prosperous condition and its splendid location. We must not, we dare not let that church suffer in this day of adversity, but who will repair the church?

To all the churches we appeal for help in this time of adversity. Let the pastors bring this matter before their respective churches and raise all the money they possibly can and send it to the writer or Wm. M. Trent, Griffith, Somerset Co., Pa. and acknowledgement will be made through the EVANGELIST. Brethren if you have the good of the cause at heart and you can be touched with sympathy, do respond to this urgent appeal.

Act! act immediately, do not wait a day, and God's blessing shall be upon you.

J. L. KIMMEL.

Shanksville, Pa., June 8, '89.

Subscription to Repair the Johnstown Church.

The Ashland City Church and S. S.	25.00
Bunker Hill Church by W. W. Summers	7.08
S. M. Kimmel, 1.00: Lee Erb, 50: T. Schrulls, 50: Lula Bohn 35	2.35
Mary Moore	5.00
Total	39.43